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Chapter two: When Must We Marry?

One of the important problems in connection with marriage and choosing a spouse, which must be taken into consideration, is the time and age of it.

Much has been written and said on this topic. And everybody has endeavoured to answer this question according to his own taste and predisposition, understanding, knowledge, and mental ability. We must say that the answer to the question "when must we marry?" is hidden in the interior of man's nature and instinct and does not need an answer, logic of knowledge, or philosophy.

We should look inside ourselves and ask its answer from our nature, instincts and inclinations, which do reply in a truthful manner, without different hurdles, ceremonies, habits, customs and prejudices. It is much like hunger and thirst, which are not controlled or governed by any law, which tells when to eat and drink. Instead, a man knows by virtue of his nature when he is hungry or thirsty and when he is not and when is a suitable time to eat, and when is not.

Yes! Laws can be formulated for the pertinent matters such as not eating rotten, prohibited and illegal food, and never drinking contaminated water. Instead, man should eat licit, lawful and healthy food and must not eat during fasting etc. But a law cannot be set for the actual and basic needs of hunger, thirst, eating and drinking.

The need for a spouse and raising a family is a natural and instinctive need, which Allah has, through His wisdom, placed in the human being. It is awakened at its particular time and season, and makes its demand. If it is answered on time and properly and its requirement is fulfilled, it traverses its natural course and reaches the summit of maturity and completion and makes man reach that point.

If it is delayed or answered in an incorrect and unnatural mode, it deviates from its natural course, revolts and rebels, and not only becomes corrupt itself, but also corrupts the man; just as if the natural and instinctive needs of man such as hunger and thirst are not properly answered, they become deviated and drive man towards ailment, disease, the eating of stale and prohibited food, and occasionally, stealing and death.

So any law in this connection must pertain to the balancing of this urge and provisioning of aids and assistance with regard to this difficulty and the removal of hurdles on the way.

But when must this need be fulfilled and when must the man and woman marry? This cannot be regulated inside a particular law. It does not have any specific law and regulation; its law is genetic and the Creator has gifted it inside human nature. Therefore, 'should' and 'should-not' in this connection are not correct. But one can study and research to discover its approaching time so as to be informed in advance and provide a suitable ground for welcoming it.

The Puberty Age

After giving all sorts of explanations, young men still ask, "Nevertheless, when is the proper time and age to marry?" The answer is: The proper time and age of marrying is when the "sexual and mental maturity" has reached its desired completion in a person. (Reaching completion does not mean the climax and apex of the possible completion, because reaching that stage, particularly in the case of mental puberty, is much distanced and difficult; but here it means reaching the ordinary and commonly known limit).

Some say Islam has fixed the marriage age for boys at 15 years and that of girls at the age of nine years. This is not correct. Islam has not given any such order. Islam is the religion of nature and gives an order against nature and human instinct. But Islam commands one to marry when one reaches puberty and maturity. According to the interpretation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) it is like a fruit whose ripening is its maturity and adult age.

Yes! Islam's divine legislation in this connection stressed the desirability of marriage (in the previous chapter we discussed some facts about the merits of marriage). But whenever this need and urge stirs itself and desires revolt and rebel and make man probe and practice prohibited acts, then it becomes obligatory and postponing and delaying it becomes prohibited.

So this divine legislation also reverts back to the law of genetics. That is to say, when puberty is reached, marriage becomes a desirable act and whenever it comes to the revolt and rebellion of emotions and the preludes of sin become obvious then marriage becomes obligatory.

When a person attains maturity and puberty (we have explained puberty) his time for marriage has arrived and delaying it would not be advisable in any way, just as its early execution is also not commendable, for it's like being an unripe fruit.

When the interior call of a person, which rises from one's nature and instinct comes, it is the time for marriage. Everyone can clearly hear this call from his interior, provided of course, that this power has not been scarred or become ill by the effect of various factors. Because it is quite evident that if this power has been scarred or become diseased, then it cannot give a timely and proper call. Just like a patient

who has lost his appetite and his health deteriorates from its normal course.

If this need and inner energy gives a call and says, "I have approached, I want a spouse," the factors hidden inside the human conscience may come to face it and argue – I have no house, no money, no dowry, I do not have my degree yet, I do not have the means to pay for the celebration, society does not approve of marriage at this age, the customs, ceremonies and family discipline do not yet approve it, a person possessing money, a house, and a car has not yet proposed to me, I have yet to find a rich girl, a wife has her expenses and then there are children to follow who too, have a lot of expenditure and headache.

What about the parties and invitations? How can I face the ceremonies and formalities? How can I get the money for the dowry, gold, dress and for purchasing other items? ..." It is evident that the poor call will retreat!

Or if that youth has gone astray through masturbation, corruption and debauchery, and deviated from the course of his nature, then that interior call of instinct too has been trampled down and there is no more chance of it raising a correct call.

An exhausted youth said: "For many years I have masturbated and now that I have married a girl, I do not have any desire for her and can not get any enjoyment from her. I still masturbate and prefer it to intercourse with my wife."

This is known as an ill and diseased nature and instinct. It can no longer hear the voice of its natural call. As a matter of fact, no more of a call or voice has been left over and survived.

Brother and sister! Let us talk a bit about the facts, about the untouched life and nature and the uncontaminated instincts and those away from the civilities, ignorance – based customs and ceremonies of society.

Let us for the time being, throw those (customs) aside so that we may talk in a free and unbounded atmosphere. Later on, we will talk about those limitations.

Oh, young sister and brother! You are yourself aware of the noise and turbulence that is going on inside you. You are aware that you need a spouse. You know that you are apprehensive and feel a gap, a void and solitude. You can very well perceive and hear your internal yearning, which calls you to find a spouse. You know quite well that you are not that child you used to be a few years ago and a change has developed inside you.

You fully understand that you have lost something (which you must find out) and whenever you think about it, there is a big inflammation that takes shape inside you and motivates you to probe and search for what you have lost.

Why do you deceive yourself? Why do you put a cover and a lid upon these sacred and natural wishes and desires? Why do you bring excuses? Why do you suppress your spirit of independence? Why do you choke up all of these passions and calls of love? Why do you allow these beautiful blooming buds to wither away? Are you scared? From what? From poverty? From ceremonies? From inflation? From responsibility of life? From having children? You are afraid you would not be able to cope with their expenses? You fear that you may not be able to continue your education? You are afraid you would not be able to manage and run your family expenses?

My dear, do not be afraid and scared. Allah is with you. Have trust in Him. Do not you believe Allah is all-strong, all-beneficent, and your helper? Would it not be a pity that you destroy your youth?

Marriage has a season and spring, and if this passes away, you would face a loss. The fruit that ripens and is not benefited from becomes spoiled and stale. Is it not a pity that a young one, who has Allah to support and help him, is afraid of such imaginary and absurd matters?

Be brave! Take steps depending and trusting upon Allah. Be contented and assured that Allah will help you and Insha'Allah you will succeed.

Allah has promised in the holy Qur'an that he will solve the problems and difficulties, saying:

"If they are needy (poor), Allah will make them free from want, out of His grace." (24:32)

Do you not believe in Allah's promise and commitment?

God forbid such be the case. Allah will definitely materialise His promise. Come on, enter the field with trust in Allah and get married! I promise you that if you minutely scrutinize and concentrate on choosing your spouse and observe and practice all the orders, commandments, standards and criterions which Islam has set for marriage and which have been described in this book, you will definitely be prosperous.

Oh brother and sister, do not say: "Perhaps you are unaware what is going on in this society. Do you not know what number of difficulties has been created upon the way to marriage? Do you not know what amount of misfortunes and afflictions are brought into effect by some selfish and foolish parents for their children in connection with their marriage?

And what amount of undue and illogical expectations they have from the sons and daughters?" Yes, I am aware of all these facts more than you are aware, since, on account of our responsibilities, answerabilities and nature of work, we are more concerned and in touch with the society. Many young ones contact us about their problems. I am thoroughly conversant and aware of the difficulties of the youth, but with all my knowledge of these problems, I say: "Marry, do not be afraid, take the step." We

will discuss the difficulties shortly.

Marriage: a medium of reaching Allah

We have already described that one of the important factors in making spiritual progress is having a well-bred and suitable spouse.

Young brother and sister, do you desire to start upon a spiritual journey and reach a place where Allah stamps your heart with His approval and pleasure, when you are still young and your heart is pure and the dust of abjectness and sin has not yet contaminated your soul?

By the grace of Allah, move on! But do not move alone, this is a risky and dangerous way. You need a companion, a helper, a sympathiser. Take the hand of another young one as your life partner and set off together, so that you may be the helper, sympathiser, associate and confidente to each other. You may make each other hopeful and encourage one another.

Think of what the Prophet (S) said:

"Whoever desires to meet Allah in a pure condition must marry (take a spouse)."1

So now that you have the love, enthusiasm and joy of the youth, move and select your partner for the life journey, now is the time to commence a journey. Do not allow this love, enthusiasm and joy change into sadness, apathy and frigidity.

The marriage that rest upon fresh love and felicity makes the coming years of life fragrant, pleasant and colourful. Take the hand of your young, vivacious life partner and fly over the heights of the sky like two loving pigeons. Make good of this duration. Do not let it go.

See what Ali (a.s) says about his wife Fatima (s.a) and how he recited verses of love, defining the duration of youth.

"We were enjoying felicity, health and youth like two pigeons in a dwelling."2

These two spouses lived a pure prosperous life full of love, and met Allah in a pure condition full of love.

Allah's salutation to them.

The time of sexual and mental maturity

In spite of the fact that it has been explained that a person's correct time of marriage can be visualized

from his interior and that the time of marriage is when a person attains sexual and mental maturity, yet this same question keeps on being discussed by the elders, parents, guardians, and those responsible for society, and even by the youth themselves: 'After all, when is the proper time and age of marriage, and when do sexual and mental maturity reach their climax and zenith?"

The response is that lands, circumstances, societies, races, tribes, families, and individuals are not homogenous and harmonious in this field; instead they are different. For example, in hot areas, sexual maturity is attained earlier than in cold ones. And in open and mixed up societies, where men and women have more chance to meet and get in touch, and where the religious ordains and commandments and the matters pertaining to veil, Islamic Hijab and intimate and non-intimate relationships are not observed, sexual puberty is attained at an early stage.

On the contrary, in the peripheries and environments where people adhere and are committed to religion, modesty and commandments of religion it is not so. In the families which are uncultured and untrained and where sexual matters are not under security or privacy, children having become aware of the sexual matters of the fathers and mothers become sexually mature sooner, as in contrast to families where these things are secured and under restricted conditions. (Sometimes even the children go astray by observing sexual matters between their parents). At the same time, the quality and quantity of food is also effective in this regard. Those who eat more energetic food attain puberty faster.

What can be said about the non-Islamic, immodest and sexually free, disorderly countries and societies? We may metaphorically say that even their primary school children are sexually aware. And the statistics and news make it evident that sexual assaults among children and the youth have become so customary and ordinary that it has blackened the face of humanity.

Nevertheless, it can be said that in our various, different countries and societies the average sexual puberty of boys is 17 and among girls, it is 14 (not religious puberty). But this age is early for marriage, because, as well as sexual puberty, mental maturity is also necessary for marriage. The age of 19 years for boys and 16 years for girls is more suitable for marriage. Of course, this is an average age, and it is possible that a boy or a girl has an early need for a spouse, so an early step may be taken.

We re-emphasise that the signs of this urge are hidden inside a person and everyone can judge it for himself. If the parents are intelligent and attentive, they can understand very well when their son or daughter needs a spouse.

The View of an Expert

Sometime age, I went to see Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini (a pious, discernible scholar conversant with family problems for many years, who has close contacts with the problems of youth). I had a talk with him on his viewpoint of the marriage age, which he has discussed in his book *"The Spouse Selection."*

Before narrating the detail of the discussion, I hereby exactly cite what he has written in his book:

"The nature and special creation of man has fixed the age of marriage and that is the puberty age. When a boy reaches puberty at the age of 16 and a girl at 10 years, they can marry.

But it is better to delay the marriage up to 17 years and 14 or 15 years in boys and girls respectively. Because boys and girls do not have sufficient amount of mental and intellectual maturity at the beginning of puberty, and at this age might have difficulties accompanied with it. Furthermore, in the initial two or three years after puberty, sexual instinct is not completely awakened and does not pressurise the youth too much, and its endurance is not so much difficult.

Therefore, it can be said that the most suitable marriage age for boys is 17 to 18 years and for girls 14 to 17 years. But it is not advisable to delay their marriage beyond the above mentioned ages, since it may cause negative physical, spiritual or social diseases and discrepancies. The sexual instinct, having completely and absolutely awakened, is provoked and excited and exerts pressure upon the youth. And there is no alternative left except fulfilling the desire lawfully. The sexual urge is just like the urge and need for water and food.

Can you tell a hungry of thirsty person to refrain from eating ad drinking? Can another activity, even exercise and recreation or games, divert the attention of a hungry and thirsty one from food or water? The sexual urge too is like hunger and thirst, rather it is many times stronger and more powerful. And if it is not soothed and achieved through lawful means, it may deviate and drag a young one towards going astray and sin, and controlling it is very difficult. And we must not remain indifferent and unmindful about the bad consequences of sexual deviation pertaining to this world and the Hereafter.

Supposedly, even if the youth could, by virtue of his faith, shame and modesty control the powerful sexual lust and does not indulge in sin, yet what would be done with its negative physical and spiritual consequences? Therefore, there is no choice but to get married at a fixed age, and one must marry as soon as possible."3

I asked him if he still held the same view and opinion about the time of marriage, even when many years had passed since the publication of his book, "Intekhabe Hamsar" (The Spouse Selection).

He replied: "yes, this is the sole way of rectification and solution to the problem of the youth; that is, they marry at the natural time of marriage, and until such time as this difficulty is not removed, no other way of solving the youth problems will bear any fruit."

I said: "Do you say that, even after taking the social facts and present difficulties on the way to marriage into consideration?" He reflected. "Yes, if all these expenditures and expenses which are incurred upon subsidiary matters, all these efforts which are concentrated upon the difficulties of the youth, all the expenses relating to missionary and cultural activities and the budget which is allocated to confronting a cultural attack – if all these sources are spent upon the marriage of the youth, and this way is opened up

for them, only then will the cultural attack and aggression no longer have any negative and adverse effect.

Let any amount of planning be made and materialised in regard of meeting and confronting the cultural attack; all that will remain ineffective whilst the problem of youth marriage at the natural age remains unsolved. The real and actual combat against cultural aggression is that the youth marry at the time of their sexual and mental puberty."

Discussion with a Friend in this Connection

During the compilation of this book I had a discussion with a good, knowledgeable and informed friend, which I hereby present to you.

The friend said: "Do you not think the age you have described fit for marriage is an early one?"

I said: "Why early? Do the sexual instinct and natural demand for a spouse and the mental maturity not reach the required standard of completion at this age? Does a healthy person, provided he does not care for the artificial difficulties and obstacles on the way to marriage, not require a spouse?"

He said? "Why not, he does require it, but the sexual instinct and urge for a spouse alone should not be taken into view. Instead, we must also view the other problems which are present on the scene."

I replied: "We have considered those problems and difficulties in chapter four."

He said: "But one thing which in my view had not been taken into consideration in chapter 4 and which pertains to chapter 2 is that the youth the age group you have discussed, do not have the readiness, preparedness and vigour or energy to manage life. How could you expect a 19 year old boy and a 16 year old girl to run a family? Normally, they need the management and guardianship of their parents."

I replied: "Allah who has created man is all-wise and has placed everything in the right position. The same Allah who has placed sexual instinct and demand for a spouse in man's nature and ordained him to marry and has so very much stressed on the haste and promptness in marriage has definitely placed the energy and capability of running his life in him also.

If there is a flaw or shortcoming, it is in our training. It is our wrong and inaccurate training which blocks and hinders the way of development and advancement of that maturity and the outflow of that energy and ability. The potential energy of running and organising a life is president in us, and its activation too is at the time of puberty. But at times, we do not provide the ground for its progress, and instead, hinder the blooming and development of it by wrong and inappropriate training.

"When parents do not allow their children to have their works done independently by themselves and do not permit them any sort of responsibility during the shape taking period of their personalities, or belittle and humiliate them and reprimand them with titles such as inefficient and incapable, it is quite clear that these young people can not manage themselves in their youth; and can not even do so in their middle and old ages!"

He said: "Anyway, what can be done now? Now that we observe that the young do not have the energy and readiness to manage their lives, is it correct that they marry and fail in managing their lives?"

I said: "The call of the sexual and spouse –demanding instinct must not remain unanswered. The problem can be solved by certain measures:

- 1– Teachers, scholars and thinkers of society should inform people about the training problems and teach them the exact way to train their children.
- 2- Parents must gradually acquaint their children with the responsibilities of life during their childhood and younger years. I have seen many young people, particularly girls, who can fulfil their duties towards life management in a nice way. Of course, I am against exerting pressure upon children and the youth, but at the same time, I oppose blandishing them. The middle way must be observed.
- 3- It is unnecessary for us to wait until a young person is completely ready to manage a life before we propose a marriage for him. Instead, when a youth feels that life's burden has started exerting upon him, he has no choice but to shade himself up, gather up his personality with all its sleeping and potential energies and get prepared to take off on the flight of life.

Many young people have been observed who did not have the readiness of a common life, but no sooner had they stepped into the realm of life management, than they became ready, capable and organised man and women, who could manage a successful life.

- 4– The period of engagement is a good opportunity for this purpose. If this period is prolonged for a few months, the youth can prepare themselves. (We have discussed this in the last part of this book).
- 5- The parents and elders of the boy and girl must help both of them, and must remain in touch with them in the beginning of their married lives so that they learn the ways, methods and means of life until such time as they can get going on their own and settle down in their lives. However, marriage should take place no sooner than the sexual and mental puberty is achieved and the rest of the matters should be settled gradually.

The subsidiary matters are subject to the principles. The principle lies in marriage, protecting one's modesty and promotion and progress of man's personality. The rest of the maters are all subsidiary ones and the principle must not be sacrificed for secondary things. But help can be extended so that the secondary thing reaches and is united to the principle..."

It Is Wrong To Dash into a Rock

Some nations and countries have played with the sexual instinct of the youth and been confronted with large-scale disorder, turmoil and corruption. After they had their fingers burnt, know that it was unwise to play with the lion's tail. And now they are gradually turning back from the way they had mistakenly followed. But it is sad that we are proceeding upon the same road that they are forsaking at present! Does it not sound wise that you must not go in the same direction that made them dash into rocks from which they are now returning from bleeding? Should we not take a lesson from their broken skulls? Has Islam not guided us, saying:

"Prosperous is the one who takes lesson from the experiences of others."

Why are we moving towards a falling spot, with a greed and eager desire, when we can distinctly and vividly see others fall from there?

Now let us pay attention to two of their important books. Dr Khudakuf one of the outstanding psychiatrists and psychologists of the ex –USSR writers:

"It should be known that youth marriages recently are to be seen taking place all over the world. For instance, in our country (USSR) 50% of marriage take place among the youth who are no older than 22 years and there are many husbands who are only 18 or 19 years old. In America, the average age of girls who marry has decreased to 20 years and fourteen million girls aged 17 also got engaged."4

Doctors Hannah and Abraham Stone, two researchers, physicians and out standings consultants for family problems in America, write in their book, which is written in a question–answer form between an engaged couple and their special consultant:– "Dr, should marriage be avoided when the man is not completely able to procure the family's expenditure?" "No, absolutely not. In my opinion, marriage should not be put off until the economic strength of a man reaches its peak. Youth reach the stage of physiological puberty before such time that they can completely procure their finances and economic sufficiency.

Hence, there is no need to look forward for economic sufficiency. But it is better that both the husband and the wife work to secure their family budget. They must not wait till the husband's income is sufficient to meet the family's requirements."5

I invite researchers, those who are sensitive to the fate of society and the young generation and parents to study the book "Marriage, the school of human making", written by Martyr Dr. Paknejad, vol.2, and the discussion about the marriage age, so that shocking acts in this connection are revealed to them.

Now that I am writing these lines, there are a number of young boys and girls in our neighbourhood who are passing through the period between 'Aqd (religious marriage ceremonies) and the wedding. Some of them are studying in high school and some in middle school. They not only receive their education, but

also their marital benefits. (Here it does not mean actual sex relations, which are only established after the ceremonial marriage).

Of course, it must be kept in mind that as a delay in marriage is inadvisable, similarly, early, unripe and immature marriage, and marriage with persons not having capacity or preparedness and readiness is also reproachful and difficult.

Marriages are of three kinds: Immature, delayed, and timely; and only the last one is desirable.

- 1. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 103, p 220.
- 2. Philosophy of Ethics, by Murtadha Mutahhari, p. 249.
- 3. Intekhab al-Hamsar, p31/32 (The spouse selection).
- 4. "The bond of life" by Khudakuf, translated by Habibian, P.13, seventh edition.
- 5. Answers to sexual and marital problems, translated by Dr. Tarazullah Akhawan, P. 14, 19th Edition.

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